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CPYRGHT

A CIA Watchdog Might Destroy Its Charge

Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Mont) is displeased with our foreign intelligence system. "We were caught short," he says, when fateful events burst out recently in Hungary and the Middle East. The senator proposes, therefore, to introduce again at the next session of Congress his measure to set up a congressional watchdog committee to keep tabs on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The arguments in favor of such a watchdog committee are persuasive. CIA is a hush-hush agency about which Congress and the public know virtually nothing. Allen W. Dulles,



Dulles

its director, has authority to hire and fire personnel without regard to any existing laws. Funds for the agency are concealed deliberately under appropriations for other agencies, and Mr. Dulles can spend that money "without regard to the provisions of law and regulations relating to the expenditure of government funds."

No information as to the size of the CIA ever has been made public. Guesses have suggested that it may employ between 8,000 and 30,000 persons and may have an annual operating budget in the neighborhood of a half billion dollars. These guesses may be wide of the mark. Even so, CIA must be a large and expensive agency. The fact that it functions behind a cloak of secrecy makes it

an anachronism in a democratic government, and an agency which, in less able hands, could be wide open to abuse.

The Hoover Commission made a careful examination of CIA last year. It recognized the need for secrecy, yet recommended as desirable the proposal to set up a congressional watchdog committee. Such a committee functions effectively in the sensitive field of atomic energy. A similar one, the Hoover Commission suggested, could assure Congress and the public that CIA was operating "in an efficient, effective and reasonably economical manner."

The other side has some persuasive arguments, too—so persuasive, in fact, that Senator Mansfield's proposal was voted down, 59 to 27, in the Senate last April.

By its very nature, CIA must operate in secrecy. It is an espionage organization.

Its agents are scattered around the globe, gathering information vital to the security of the United States. However repugnant the idea of spying may be to the average American, the fact is that a nation like ours with vast influence and responsibilities in the world couldn't function effectively, and perhaps couldn't survive, without something like the CIA. In an uneasy world, it is as essential to our

security as a military establishment.

The danger in Senator Mansfield's proposal is that a congressional watchdog committee might destroy the effectiveness of the CIA by leaking some of its secrets, perhaps inadvertently. Surely, any such committee would have to be made up of the most responsible and dependable members of Congress. It would have to be a "select" committee and great care would have to be exercised in the selecting for a single irresponsible or headline-grabbing congressman could cause untold damage. One has only to recall that Senator McCarthy, itching to get a look at CIA, once announced that he had "more than 100 pages of evidence of bungling, incompetence, inefficiency, waste and Communist infiltration in CIA."

Current happenings put CIA in a new light. Most of the previous assessments of its work have dealt largely with abstracts. The recent events in Poland, Hungary and the Middle East, however, are tangible events; they provide something concrete against which the performance of CIA can be measured.

The public should not expect to have all the details spread out on the record. It would seem useful and desirable, however, for a special committee of Congress to inquire as to how well or how badly CIA functioned in anticipating the recent events in Central Europe and the Middle East. Out of such an inquiry could come a better judgment on the value of Senator Mansfield's proposal.



Mansfield